

# Analysis on the Causes and Effects of News Entertainment Phenomenon

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**Abstract.** Due to the development of a fast-paced society, high pressure originating from work and study has shown great influence on people's daily life. In order to alleviate the high pressure, people start to find more entertainment. This trend led to changes in news content and its form. Under the development of a socialist market economy, media has to compete with each other, satisfying the entertainment requirement of the public, at the same time spreading news. Finally, they can win their market share under hyper-commercialism. From the lens of spread, the phenomenon of pan-entertainment news will be researched. In this paper, Weibo, one of the largest social media platforms, serves as the main research object. An analysis of trending topics on Weibo will be carried out to see how pan-entertainment news spreads and its influence. In addition to that, the reason why pan-entertainment appeared will be discussed. After the analysis of Weibo trending topics, it can be noticed that the public prefer to trust celebrities' words rather than authority words. From introspection of media and target audience, a correct guide can be achieved, which can make a contribution to the positive development of entertainment news.

**Keywords:** Pan-entertainment; news entertainment; Weibo.

## 1. Introduction

Pan-entertainment means that the programs in the media are mostly entertaining, and the overall style is low. Its content is inanity and superficial, aiming to attract focus [1]. It is a cultural phenomenon based on consumption and enjoyment [2]. Due to the development of mass media, information dissemination stimulates the trend of cultural entertainment. Moreover, news producers viewed entertainment as a common choice in order to make profits. Therefore, promoting entertainment news became the hottest product. Delivered by new mass media, like television, internet or film, the pan-entertainment of news is growing rapidly.

Mass media entertainment is taking the mass media as the carrier, with consumerism and hedonism as the core, meeting the public's sensory consumption needs. In the process of production and dissemination, the dissemination of contents and forms of entertainment elements have a high possibility to make entertainment elements in flood, glibness vulgar phenomenon. Sometimes people even infiltrate some unhealthy entertainment elements into the program to delight the audience.

The first time of news became entertaining in China dates back to the last century, the first appearance of the newspaper. The newspaper aims to educate publics, at first. Later, in order to be close to public's daily life, vulgar and grandstanding content appeared. When it comes to the 21st century, the breakthrough of the internet and technology brought more media types and social network platforms. Weibo, one of the largest social network platforms in mainland China, accelerated the development and spread of the pan-entertainment phenomenon. Many people obtain news from Weibo. However, the trending topic on Weibo was dominated by entertainment news, like celebrities' gossip. The celebrities' gossip attracts public concern, winning netflow, which is the main development approach of entertaining news on Weibo. So, it can be clearly learned that entertaining news aims at attracting public's attention, winning net flow, and, finally capital achieving the economy value.

In the following content, this paper will analyze the reason behind pan-entertainment and its influence asked on three reflections. Based on the three reflections, a problem of people preferring to trust celebrities rather than authorities, will be analyzed.

## 2. Three Reflections of Pan-Entertainment

The entertaining news can be divided into three categories, the Pan-entertaining style, the Pan-entertaining content and the Pan-entertaining expression. A detailed discussion about three categories will be presented in sequence.

### 2.1. The Pan-entertaining style

In order to make the news become attractive, trigger public's appetite for reading and increasing the hits, and media organizations add more suspense by adjusting the title of the news with exaggerated descriptions, even bending the truth. Due to the widely spread of fake news, the public begins to regard news as entertainment in their subconscious.

One typical phenomenon is the exaggerated description of legal news. Taking Huan Yu case, a boy killing his mother, for instance, most media organizations reported this case with an emphasis of his psychology, ignoring the illegal facts [3]. Some of them added so many emotional words to attract readers. Legal news is often rigorous and serious in nature. However, in order to attract the public's attention, many media organizations did research about the victims or perpetrators. Then, news reporters ignore the seriousness of the legal case, the fact of a legal case, and the alertness brought by legal case, and focus on the expression of the tragedy or comedy [3]. A typical case is a typhoon "Lekima" report from Xinjing Newspaper. The journalist's self-laugh reporting style attracts lots of people's comments. In a short report about the typhoon "Lekima", the male journalist said the strong of the wind and even made a joke about his weight, like there was one saying a person with 80 kg would not be blown away by the 10<sup>th</sup> wind. He said that with his weight, he could bear 12th wind. This part was spread fast on the internet. People only discuss the journalist's imaginative reporting style. Few people show their concerns about the severity of the disaster. As a formal report, this report about the typhoon did not meet public's expectation of a serious news, either from the lens of news transparency or the requirements for news.

The logic behind that pan-entertaining style is that when the core content is the same, the media has to find new ways to win attraction from the public. This also reflects public's requirements. According to Elihu Katz's "Use- and Satisfaction" theory, the effects of mass media can be investigated by people's psychology and behavior [4]. As presented at the beginning of this paper, people undertake extremely high pressure at present. They just want to relax. The simple and straightforward stimulation makes the audience happy and relaxed, meeting their expectation from audience [5].

The entertaining style of news has an extremely negative influence on the news industry. Such an expression blurs the focus. The public can not aware of the truth. Therefore, it is important for media industry people to rethink the entertaining style of news.

### 2.2. The Pan-entertaining content

News can be divided into two categories, soft news and hard news. Hard news reports politics or other serious livelihood-related issues. Soft news refers to the news about entertainment like celebrities' scandals or gossip, or other joking content. The increase in the amount of soft news is a reflection of pan-entertainment news content [4]. According to Xia, the ratio of soft news to hard news keeps increasing, and the soft news appears at a much higher frequency [3]. Media organization keeps an eye on public's feedback and requirements. When they notice that soft news wins more attention, they will publicize more soft news rather than hard news. As it can be seen from the trending news on Weibo, almost every day, the top 50 trending topic are related to celebrities. For instance, one day in May, three topics, "Mi Yang got hurt", "Xinger Hu is pregnant" and "Mother's Day" rank at the top of the trending topics list. Within 7 hours, the topic "Mi Yang (a Chinese actress) got hurt" got 640 thousand views. In addition to that, less society and political news is on the trending topic list. Taking the top 50 hotspot topic on 14th May as an instance, there is no topic about people's

livelihood. The report about politics accounts for only 4%. Only one political topic, “focus on one belt and one road” got third place.

The reason behind the increase in the amount of soft news is a reflection of reformation of the spreading method, with a change of audiences’ appetite on news [4]. The development of the economy improves people’s life. People’s expectations on news become more and more multi-dimension. Alleviating pressure and meeting people’s desire on short and intense happy, soft news become more and more.

In addition to that, pursuing profit results the widespread of soft news. Similar to the mechanism behind the spreading of the pan-entertains style, once one media organization notice that soft news could bring them profit, they will show more preference for soft news [6].

What’s more, the change of transmission subject also makes a contribution to the pan-entertainment content appearance. Previously, the news was made by professional journalists, reporters and editors. At present, every user on social media could make news. Most of the news they made are soft news.

The increased amount of soft news has a severe influence. First of all, the media plays a critical role in building and spreading stars’ image, it leads public to adore stars blindly [7]. Young fans might even do illegal actions for their idol. Stars’ images or topics frequently appeared on Weibo, which led the formation of extremely adoring stars. Young people could hardly tell right and wrong under such circumstances, finally resulting in a transformation from entertainment to blind adoration. What’s worse, blind adoration leads to the loss of spirit and thought. As more and more soft news appeared, Weibo, as a main social platform, moved to a more entertaining direction. However, such development betrayed the positive social value.

### 2.3. The Pan-entertaining expression

The previous two Pan entertaining categories are behavior from a media organization. The entertaining expression is mass behavior. People want to express their opinion on the internet, which could get off their pressure and express their dissatisfaction about the life. This gradually formed a self-entertainment. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, when people comment on hotspot and share their opinion, respect needs are achieved [8].

People’s Daily reported an event that one headmaster had bullied to one student. Under such a serious issue, the comments are full of emoji, playing a joke about that event. Less serious comment or discussion can be found.

One reason behind the entertaining expression was a result of social media influencers’ responsibility shortage. Weibo is a platform where people could express their opinion without any prescribed restrictions. In order to attract more public attention, some social media influencers will choose content that the public show interests, like celebrities’ gossip, daily life. Besides that, those social media influencers might post spoof photos or a joke about the issue, which distract public’s attention from serious public issues.

Another reason could be drawn from the theory of supreme entertainment. As Neil Postman discussed in the book *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (1985), when all public voice appeared as an entertaining style, all social organizations will finally become prisoner of entertainment [9]. This also reflects the current situation about Weibo users. If there is no control over the spread of the supreme entertainment, people will lose themselves in entertainment and lose their ability to independent thought.

The entertaining expression converts serious news to entertainment, which blurs the serious aspect of the news and it opposite to the original intention of the news.

## 3. Discussion

News entertainment brings one phenomenon. The public starts to distrust authority, instead, people prefer to trust the words of celebrities or social media influencers. In the news industry, there is a

famous saying, news is the first draft of one story. As time passed, more decoration was added to the story, and finally, the truth became less. There are three reasons explaining the occurrence of that phenomenon.

First of all, the pan-entertainment news content provides much fake news. In the era of the information explosion, it is hard for people to tell the truth from the false. Secondly, compared to the authorities, the publics are more familiar with celebrities due to their frequent appearance on Weibo. There is no boundary between public and social media influencers. Most social media influencers are normal people, of which the public is familiar, or even the public thinks they are almost the same. Such cognition dismisses the distance between social media influencers and the publics, which facilitates the public's trust in celebrities' or social media influencers' words. However, authority is usually at a superior place, presenting a distance from public. Such distance also weakens public's trust about authority's words. Thirdly, the intervention of capital aggravates the pan-entertainment, lowering public trust about authority. One capital is the celebrities' companies. In order to strengthen the public image of their celebrities, they buy trending news to increase the frequency of celebrities appeared to publics. Public also likes to read those relax information and obtain relax and instant pleasure. Then, those celebrities' companies can obtain profit from their celebrities. Another intervention method from capital is buying entertainment news to cover the social scandal news. With that kind of intervention, what public read and know are filtrated by capital [10]. On the surface, people can express their opinion openly and freely. However, public's discussions are still under the control and surveillance of capital. The such intervention leads the public to question whether the so-called authority is a tool of capital.

In order to solve that problem, controlling on the spread of pan-entertainment is vital. This requires a cooperation among public individual, platform and media organizations, Over-entertainment led to a decrease in concerns about daily life. Ideally, in the future, people could show their interests on the reality of one serious news on the internet and its influence, rather than the tidbits. If people show a high need on serious news and cares more about news and society, both media organizations and social media platform will provide more chance for the spread of serious news, rather than celebrities' gossip news. Besides adjust personal needs, platform can do some adjustments to guide people to show more cares about serious events. In order to change the pan-entertainment, Weibo adjust its trending news ranking list. They categorize whole key words into entertainment, society and news, film, star and so on. Although Weibo separate entertainment and serious news, like livelihood topic or politics topic, the amount of pure entertainment still ranks most with a higher focus.

It is important to spread positive idea and thought for publics. Secondly it is important to put social effects at top. In order the pursue a high economy value or profit, media organizations might ignore the social effects brought by their news. They may use entertaining news to attract public's attention. In order to dismiss the negative influence brought by pan-entertainment, news industry need to be strict for their products.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Media organizations want to earn money. At present, media organizations attracting more attention or followers indicate economic value. With this target, news entertainment appeared in three aspects, pan-entertainment in style, content and expression. Both Pan—entertainment in style and content are the results of netflow competition among different media organizations. The pan-entertainment in style leads to various report styles and the appearance of clickbait. The pan-entertainment in content lead to an increase in the amount of soft news and a decrease in reporting hard news. Individuals have a large number of needs for relaxation and amusement, and the strong appetite for entertainment results in blind adoration of celebrities. They expressed their opinion in a more casual and interesting way. People even lose a serious attitude when it is required. Many people hold an idea, supreme entertainment.

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